

HOMESCHOOL TEACHER

Winter 2007/08



How to Write a Unit Study

How to Identify Dyslexia

Our Typical Day

Teaching With Science Projects



Winter 2007/08

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Each article has been tabbed by subject

Art

To aid in organizing content when printing and saving for future use.



*Try not to have a good time ...
This is supposed to be educational.
- Charles Schulz*

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How to Write a Homeschool Unit Study

By Brenda Hoffman

Regardless of what methodology you normally use for your homeschool, unit studies can provide you with a nice break from the norm sometimes. They are especially nice whenever you're trying to teach your child(ren) to think a little more about how the different parts of life actually fit together, and they can also give you a break whenever you're faced with the doldrums.

So, how do you decide what subjects to pursue whenever you're ready to do a unit study? Well, take a look at your child and see what he/she is deeply interested in. Those are the subjects to pursue with your unit studies. Another way to decide what would make a great unit study is to look through your year's studies and notice if there are any "holes" in subject matter that you think should be filled. Once you find that "hole," you can find a unit study on that topic, and take a week or two to teach it. For instance, if your child finds black holes fascinating, but your science text book covers them in just a paragraph or two, then there is the perfect opportunity to do a unit study on astronomy.

Once you've figured out what you'd like to do a unit study on, all you need is a little time and creativity, and you can create your own unit studies. Assembling your own curriculum around one topic sounds difficult, but if this wasn't the case, then educational companies such as "Teacher Created Materials" wouldn't publish and sell as many great unit studies as they do.

There are 2 main drawbacks to designing your own unit studies. First of all, it takes time. If you're a busy parent, this could be enough of a reason to take a trip to your nearest teachers' supply store with your credit card in hand. Secondly, it may require access to a couple of grade-level subject books (i.e. science, language arts, or math) so that you know which skills are typically covered at a particular grade level. If you have a good library with an educational books department, then you may also have the perfect excuse to spend a long Saturday with a pocket full of change at the library with a stack of books. Another idea is that if you have a good set of Internet research skills, you can spend your Saturday tucked away at home.

Now that we see the drawbacks, what are the benefits of a unit study? You can teach whatever your heart desires. Plus, if you decide to create your own unit study, you'll find that it is cheaper and more economical than tracking down a pre-made unit study. Furthermore, nobody knows your child as well as you do, and therefore nobody can prepare a unit study for your child as well as you can.

Whenever you're creating your own unit study, you need to keep in mind that your unit

study needs to cover all of the subjects that you'd normally teach, unless you plan to skip a specific subject and keep working through your regular curriculum for that subject. However, to create a complete unit study, you need to include the first 2 subjects from the following list and as many of the other subjects as you can logically fit in there too. Now for the list:

(1.) Math - You need to create math problems at your child's level. For instance, if you're working with a young child on a unit study about baseball, then you can practice addition with bats and balls, write a story problem that talks about number of pitches thrown until the team reached the final out, etc. However, older children would need something that is more on their level. For instance, you may discuss the speed of the bat; distance the ball travels, or the number of hot dogs that individual team fans eat.

(2.) Language Arts - This area includes reading, comprehension, grammar and writing skills. While you don't need to include every one of these items in every unit study that you write, you should have your child write something about the topic. A great suggestion here would be to have your child read a book about the topic then write a narrative telling you about what he/she read in the book.

(3.) Science - Sometimes a unit study lends itself quite easily to science, but other times you'll find yourself having to work a little bit harder. For instance, a unit study on bugs will let you off the hook since the entire unit study is about science. However, if you are doing a unit study about ancient Egypt then you may need to take some time to look at the creations of the Egyptian engineers, study mummification, think about ancient medicine, or consider the tools that the Egyptians used to do their work.

(4.) Social Studies or Geography - This may be your main topic, but if it isn't, then you'll need to work some information into your topic. Some questions that can help you here include: Where was your topic first seen or invented? What culture surrounded the time or event? Where did this take place? You may also want to learn more about the people of that time period and place.

(5.) Art - Take time to draw, build, act, design or create. You could design a Roman mosaic, sketch an insect's genetic makeup, build a temple from clay or LEGOs, create a tapestry to illustrate the unit that you're studying (felt shapes work for quick tapestries when needlepoint takes way too long), or paint the flowers that you're learning about.

(6.) Music - Sometimes music fits into a unit study nicely. For instance, you could always listen to some folk music while you explore the civil unrest of the 1960s. However, if you're studying something more scientific, then you may need to work a little harder to fit music into that unit study.

(7.) History - Adding history to a unit study should be relatively easy, regardless of the

topic. You could simply research when an event began or an item was invented or you could talk about the events and times that affected an item's inventor.

(8.) Physical Education - Here again, you may need to be a bit creative. However, when you discover that physical education fits into your unit study, then you should definitely use it! For instance, if you're studying the ancient Greeks, then you could run footraces like they did.

If you're still not certain what to do for your very first unit study, try "following" your child(ren) around for a couple days and watch what they do. For instance, if your child spends all of his/her time engrossed in books, then think about a literature-based unit study (i.e. how books are made). On the other hand, your child may spend his/her time outside digging for rocks. Then why not does an archeology or rocks and minerals unit study?

Of course, there are some topics that you can use numerous times as your child(ren) grows older. These include:

- (1.) Animals, horses, or mammals
- (2.) Baseball, basketball, fencing, or sports in general
- (3.) Cooking or catering (which may include business and economics information)
- (4.) Kites
- (5.) Flight
- (6.) Transportation
- (7.) Weather
- (8.) Historical cultures (i.e. medieval history, ancient Egypt, etc.)

The spark of a unit study is lit whenever your child(ren) mentions an interest. Whenever they do, you need to write it down somewhere. Keep a running list of interests and you'll soon have more than you'll know what to do with. However, even if your child only shows a deep interest in one or two topics, you should take time to explore those. You may discover that you're able to create several unit studies based on the first one as new interests are developed.

About the Author: Reverend Brenda Hoffman has been delivering holistic health & wellness advice for over 7 yrs. As a home based professional & mom of 1, she operates a holistic wellness & homeschool network. Learn to enjoy a healthier lifestyle & richer relationships with your homeschool children through the range of resources at <http://www.yourhealthyfamilyhome.com> Source: www.isnare.com

Dyslexia: How to Recognize Dyslexia in Children

By Susan Du Plessis

The term "dyslexia" was introduced in 1884 by the German ophthalmologist, R. Berlin. He coined it from the Greek words "dys" meaning ill or difficult and "lexis" meaning word, and used it to describe a specific disturbance of reading in the absence of pathological conditions in the visual organs. In a later publication, in 1887, Berlin stated that dyslexia, "presuming right handedness," is caused by a left-sided cerebral lesion. He spoke of "word-blindness" and detailed his observations with six patients with brain lesions who had full command over verbal communications but had lost the ability to read.

In the century to follow the narrow definition Berlin attached to the term dyslexia would broaden. Today the term dyslexia is frequently used to refer to a "normal" child -- or adult -- who seems much brighter than what his reading and written work suggest. While the term is mostly used to describe a severe reading problem, there has been little agreement in the literature or in practice concerning the definition of severe or the specific distinguishing characteristics that differentiate dyslexia from other reading problems. Instead of getting involved in the wrangling over a definition, one could simply use the "symptoms" below as an indication that a child has a reading problem and therefore needs help.

DIRECTIONAL CONFUSION

Directional confusion may take a number of forms, from being uncertain of which is left and right to being unable to read a map accurately, says Dr. Beve Hornsby in her book "Overcoming Dyslexia." A child should know his left and right by the age of five, and be able to distinguish someone else's by the age of seven. Directional confusion affects other concepts such as up and down, top and bottom, compass directions, keeping one's place when playing games, being able to copy the gym teacher's movements when he is facing you, and so on. As many as eight out of ten severely dyslexic children have directional confusion. The percentage is lower for those with a mild condition, she says.

Directional confusion is the reason for reversing of letters, whole words or numbers, or for so-called mirror writing. The following symptoms indicate directional confusion:

- * The dyslexic may reverse letters like 'b' and 'd', or 'p' and 'q', either when reading or writing.
- * He may invert letters, reading or writing 'n' as 'u', or 'm' as 'w'.
- * He may read or write words like 'no' for 'on', or 'rat' for 'tar'.

* He may read or write 17 for 71.

* He may mirror write letters, numbers and words.

SEQUENCING DIFFICULTIES

Many dyslexics have trouble with sequencing, i.e. perceiving something in sequence and also remembering the sequence. Naturally this will affect their ability to read and spell correctly. After all, every word consists of letters in a specific sequence. In order to read one has to perceive the letters in sequence, and also remember what word is represented by the sequence of letters in question. By simply changing the sequence of the letters in 'name', it can become 'mean' or 'amen'.

The following are a few of the dyslexia symptoms that indicate sequencing difficulties:

* When reading, the dyslexic may put letters in the wrong order, reading 'felt' as 'left', or 'act' as 'cat'.

* He may put words in the wrong order, reading 'are there' for 'there are'.

* He may omit letters, i.e. reading or writing 'cat' for 'cart', or 'wet' for 'went'.

Dyslexics may also have trouble remembering the order of the alphabet, strings of numbers, for example telephone numbers, the months of a year, the seasons, and events in the day. Younger children may also find it hard to remember the days of the week. Some are unable to repeat longer words orally without getting the syllables in the wrong order, for example words like 'preliminary' and 'statistical'.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE LITTLE WORDS

A frequent comment made by parents of children struggling with their reading is, "He is so careless, he gets the big difficult words, but keeps making silly mistakes on all the little ones." Certainly, the poor reader gets stuck on difficult words, but many do seem to make things worse by making mistakes on simple words they should be able to manage -- like 'if', 'to', 'and'.

It is important to note that this is extremely common, and not a sign that a child is particularly careless or lazy.

LATE TALKING

Research has revealed a dramatic link between the abnormal development of spoken language and learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The following are just a few examples:

* A study in 1970 of Doctor Renate Valtin of Germany, based on one hundred pairs of dyslexic and normal children, found indications of backwardness in speech development and a greater frequency of speech disturbances among dyslexics than among normal children.

* According to Doctor Beve Hornsby, author of "Overcoming Dyslexia," about 60 percent of dyslexics were late talkers.

* In her book "Learning Disabilities," author Janet Lerner states, "language problems of one form or another are the underlying basis for many learning disabilities. Oral language disorders include poor phonological awareness, delayed speech, disorders of grammar or syntax, deficiencies in vocabulary acquisition, and poor understanding of oral language."

In most cases, a baby should be able to understand simple words and commands from the age of nine months. From around a year he should be saying his first words. By two he should have a vocabulary of up to 200 words, and be using simple two-word phrases such as "drink milk." By three he should have a vocabulary of up to 900 words and be using full sentences with no words omitted. He may still mix up his consonants but his speech should be comprehensible to strangers. By four, he should be fully able to talk, although he may still make grammatical errors.

If a child talks immaturely, or still makes unexpected grammatical errors in his speech when he is five years old, this should alert the parents to probable later reading problems. The parents should immediately take steps to improve the child's language.

DIFFICULTIES WITH HANDWRITING

Some dyslexics suffer from poor handwriting skills. The word "dysgraphia" is often used to describe a difficulty in this area, and is characterized by the following symptoms:

* Generally illegible writing.

* Letter inconsistencies.

* Mixture of upper/lower case letters or print/cursive letters.

* Irregular letter sizes and shapes.

- * Unfinished letters.
- * Struggle to use writing as a communicative tool.

OTHER DYSLEXIA SYMPTOMS

- * Makes up a story, based on the illustrations, which bears no relation to the text.
- * Reads very slowly and hesitantly.
- * Loses orientation on a line or page while reading, missing lines or reading previously-read lines again.
- * Tries to sound the letters of the word, but is then unable to say the correct word. For example, sounds the letters 'c-a-t' but then says 'cold'.
- * Reads with poor comprehension.
- * Remembers little of what he reads.
- * Spells words as they sound, for example 'rite' for 'right'.
- * Ignores punctuation. He may omit full stops or commas and fail to see the need for capital letters.
- * Poor at copying from the board.

About the Author: Susan du Plessis has been involved in helping children reach their full potential for 18 years. She holds BD and BA Hons (psychology). For more information on dyslexia visit http://www.audiblox2000.com/dyslexia_dyslexic/dyslexia.htm

Source: www.isnare.com

Teaching Your Child Analytical Skills Through Science Projects

By Just Science

There are many things that science projects can teach a child. Science projects can teach your child more about science and the way the world works. Another thing that you can teach your child through science projects is analytical skills. Here are some ways that science projects teaches your child analytical skills.

First off you might be thinking to yourself what analytical skills are. Analytical skills are problem solving skills. You can teach your child analytical skills through science projects by getting their curiosity going. This can be done by finding something that interests them. For example, if your child is interested in how electricity is made. Help your child research a certain form of electricity device. Then use this research to conduct a science fair project. Using analytical skills, such as the scientific method, figure out ways to create electric currents, and to generate that electricity etc. Find out what your child can do or make to help show their studies and findings on their project. For example, say that your child wanted to explain how a remote control worked. Using analytical skills figure out a way to show how you have to have a signal that goes from the remote to whatever device you are trying to control. Then use this as part of your presentation for your child's science project.

You can teach your child analytical skills through science projects by correctly applying the scientific method. Talk to them about a subject, ask for a theory, and then test it. Prove the theory false or true, then have a discussion about why things turned out the way they did. This will help your child see that thinking is a process of steps. That decisions should be made through tests, and that analyzing outcomes, procedures, etc. is the best way to come up with a solution.

Teaching your child analytical skills through science projects will help your child to start thinking about every little thing that was once just a part of life. Like using the telephone or putting a plastic bag over a credit card that won't read when being swiped normally. These are things that a child could question. You could do a little research and show your child the answers to why things work the way they work by doing a science project on the question that your child has asked. This will help teach your child analytical skills through science projects because science is simply a process of analyzing what we see and breaking it down into simpler, not compound explanations.

Another way to teach your child analytical skills through science projects are to have discussions. Ask your child questions about how things work. Ask them how they think something works. Or ask your child what they think could solve certain problems. This will help their minds to start working and to start using analytical skills to figure out the

answer to the questions you are asking. They will then start asking the right kinds of questions to deduct answers.

All of these are ways that you can teach analytical skills to your child through science projects. Teaching your child analytical skills through science projects is very important and will help them when it comes to the real world. Analytical skills will help your child in the work place with projects they are assigned to. Analytical skills will also help in personal situations with other co workers or friends. The more you work to teach your child analytical skills through science project the better. Teaching your child analytical skills will only help improve the way they think and the way they deal with real situations in life. Analytical skills will help them be able to cope in the real world because they will know how to solve problems because of the analytical skills they have.

About the Author: Just Science Projects is one of the leading
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What Is Our Day Like? Our Typical Homeschooling Day

By Jahnis Townsend

When we tell people we homeschool, one of the first questions I am asked is, "What is your day like?" The following is a typical day:

I get up early, about 7:00 or 7:30 to have some quiet time, read the newspaper, and have coffee. When Aaron gets up, about 7:45 or 8:00, we all have breakfast together, Mom, Dad, and Son.

The "school day" begins after we clean up the dishes and walk the dog. I don't really like to call it the "school day" because it is actually a "life day", how we spend our life.

We spend about one hour first thing doing Bible verse and Bible. Aaron reads the verse chosen for the day and reviews the verses from the previous days. He doesn't have to say them word for word, paraphrasing is ok. Then we read from where ever we left off in the Bible. I am using the suggested weekly Bible reading schedule from What Your Child Needs to Know When by Robin Sampson. Then, he writes the Bible verse to practice his copy work. He then can draw a picture from the story, write something in his own words, or any other additional appropriate activity.

If we do nothing else all day, the Bible lesson is the most important. The lesson incorporates reading, listening, penmanship, spelling, vocabulary, and sometimes even math. Did you know "a beka" is a unit of measure equal to .02 oz.?

Next, we practice our logic using Building Thinking Skills Student Edition; Plus Instruction and Answer Guide - Level 3 Verbal - Two Book Set by Sandra Parks and Howard Black. This workbook is practice of critical thinking skills for reading, writing, math, and science. I did have to purchase the Instruction and Answer Guide as well as the Student Guide. We usually do one or two pages depending on the exercise.

Next comes reading. We chose the Original McGuffey's Eclectic School Series. Based on Aaron's reading level, we chose The Original McGuffey's Eclectic Third Reader (Eclectic school series.) It is great. In another post, I'll go into detail about why it is so amazing. Reading is again another hour.

Of course we can take a snack break in between.

Math is next. We are using the Saxon Math 7/6: Homeschool Edition. Again, more detail

will follow about the Saxon Math series. We use the direction in the student guide and I also incorporate flash cards, addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division, also, time and money, into the warm up. We go through the new material together, then I fix lunch while Aaron works on the Lesson Practice. We have lunch and then he can finish his work on his own, with a little help when he needs it.

After lunch it is time for a walk to clear our heads and then finishing up any extra projects such as history reading, or timeline, or free reading. We are usually finished by 2:00 or 2:30.

I will go into detail about the math, reading, spelling, logic, and history lessons later. Also, physical activities and field trips are included in the plan.

We have great days working and playing together.

About the Author: Jahnis Townsend writes and homeschools in Marietta, Ga. Learn more about homeschooling by visiting her blog - **Peace in Our Home – Homeschooling**.

<http://www.peace-in-our-home.blogspot.com/>

The Making Of A Home School Group

By Tango Pang

Deciding to home school your children is a big decision to make. Now that you have decided it is the right thing for your family, you certainly have to make sure that your children are getting the best out of the entire learning experience. Having a home school group is a great way to make sure that it happens.

So What is a Home School Group?

A home school group is something that every home school atmosphere can and should take advantage of. You can have a school group with other children who are being home schooled in your town or city. When you have a home school group meeting, all of the children who are being home schooled will be able to get together, to talk, and to share their learning experiences.

A home school group is very important to the development of your home schooled child. One of the benefits of home schooling is that you can be in charge of what your kid is learning, how, and when the learning taking place.

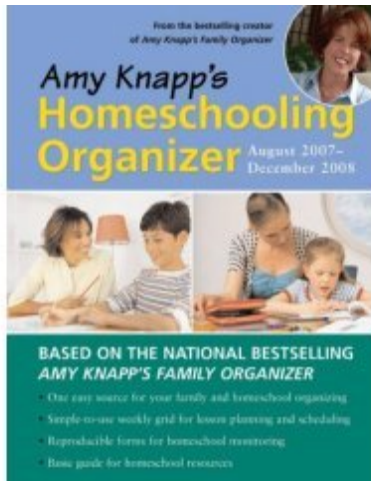
However, one of the major drawbacks of home schooling is that your child is not getting the socialization that is necessary for good social development. If you have a home school group that meets quite often, you are going to be giving your children the right dose of socialization as well.

There are several things that a home school group can probably do. They can get together to participate in sports, or they can even get together to have certain learning classes at the same time. You can also go on field trips with your group.

You can even do things together in a home school group that your children would do in regular school, like holiday parties and other events. If you can have a home school group that your children can be a part of all the time, they are going to also learn how to get along well with others, and you are going to have a well rounded child.

You should check with your local home school association to see if there is already a home school group that your children can join, when you decide to home school them. Having kids at home, but also giving them the support of a home school group is very important to their development as a whole. Remember that this is something that every home schooled child should be a part of during their lives.

About the Author: Tango Pang is an authority in the Education field. Home Schooling need not be difficult. Click on **Guide To Successful Home Schooling** <http://www.howto-homeschooling.com/guide-to-home-schooling/> to read more.
Source: www.isnare.com



The only homeschooling organizer for this rapidly growing market. Homeschooling families are the fastest growing trend in education and are an underserved market. Over 2 million children (grades K–12) are homeschooled in the U.S. and that number is on the rise. Many homeschooling families have asked for a tool like Amy Knapp's Family Organizer to help them meet all their organizing and record-keeping needs. Includes:

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